

Original Paper

Towards Effective Interpreter-Mediated Biblical Sermons in English and Kiswahili in the Tanzanian Charismatic and Pentecostal Churches: Any Challenge or Complexity Faced by the Church Interpreter?

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Abstract

Interpretation is considered to be one of the most challenging professions in the world. This is due to its involvement of several abilities beyond language competence. Church interpretation is done predominantly by the untrained volunteering interpreters who in return, face a number of challenges. This paper examined the stakeholders' perceptions towards the interpretation challenges facing the church interpreters by drawing examples from Charismatic and Pentecostal churches in the Tanzanian context. The study was conducted in Dar es Salaam, one of the largest commercial cities located in the Eastern Coastal regions of Tanzania in Africa. Data were collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions. It was found out that church interpreters encountered numerous challenges due to a lack of linguistic competence, experience, and professional training. Some of these challenges include; lack of enough biblical knowledge, difficulties in pronunciation, the use of difficult vocabulary, and poor preparations. It is recommended that church sermon interpreters should be provided with professional training in Translation and Interpretation Studies.

Keywords

Church interpretation, Sermons Interpretation, Linguistic challenge, Church interpreters, Interpretation challenge, Language competence, Untrained volunteering interpreters

1. Introduction

Challenges facing church interpreters have been a continuous topic in the literature of Interpreting Studies. The focus has been normally centered on interpreting problems encountered by untrained

volunteering church interpreters. Accordingly, researchers such as Biamah (2013), Musyoka and Karanja (2014), and Odhiambo, Musyoka and Matu (2013) have explained numerous interpreting problems facing church interpreters in Kenya.

A number of past studies including those aforementioned have discussed these problems based on the analysis of sermons interpreted from one language to another. The current paper has examined the interpretation challenges faced by church interpreters based on perceptions of Christian stakeholders such as church members, preachers, and interpreters in English and Kiswahili languages. This is because interpreters' challenges are reliably explained by participants who have experienced such challenges rather than depending on the researcher's intuition. The discussion in this study is a result of the research that was conducted by the researcher of this study on the assessment of the church sermon interpretation service in Tanzania as his PhD Thesis.

2. Literature Review

In church settings, interpretation is principally done by the untrained volunteering interpreters instead of professional interpreters (Hokkanen, 2017; Karlik, 2013; Balci Tison, n.d., 2016). The ultimate goal of interpretation of any kind is to facilitate effective communication with people who use different languages. According to Musyoka and Karanja (2014), the goal of interpretation is that the message gives the same impact to the target audience as it was intended by the source speaker. The church interpretation is supposed to be an effective means of communication especially when the preacher and the audience do not share a common language (Odhiambo, Musyoka, & Matu, 2013). Sometimes, there are moments when two or more speakers wish to engage in the communication act and yet they do not share languages. When this situation happens, interpretation service becomes important. The common modes of interpretation in religious settings include consecutive, simultaneous, sentence by sentence interpreting as well as whispered interpreting (Odhiambo, Musyoka, & Matu, 2013; Hokkanen, 2012; Tseng, 2009; Peremota, 2017).

Globally, several studies such as those by Balci Tison (2016), Downie (2016), Hokkanen (2016), Karlik (2013) have been conducted to examine the practices of church interpretation in the world. The areas which have been investigated by several scholars include the qualities of church interpretation (Kalina, 2002), interpretation strategies (Riccardi, 1996; Musyoka & Karanja, 2014. Ribas, 2012; Jordens, 1977; Marschark, Sapere, & Seewagen, 2009), and analysis of errors by interpreters (Swabey et al., 2016; Kirimi, Muriungi, & Njogu, 2012; Gile, 1995). Other areas include the role of interpreters (Thembhani, 2016; D áz-Galaz, Padilla, & Bajo, 2015; Hokkanen, 2017), and practices and product of interpretation (Wang, 2006; Hokkanen, 2012; Balci Tison, 2016; Tseng, 2009; Tiselius, 2013).

In Africa, several studies have been conducted to examine interpretation problems facing church interpreters in their countries (Odhiambo, Musyoka, & Matu, 2013; Musyoka & Karanja, 2014; Thembhani, 2016; Biamah, 2013). For instance, Thembhani (2016) explored sociolinguistic challenges facing interpreters in some charismatic churches in Vatsonga communities in South Africa. Thembhani

found out that linguistic competence, the tempo of preachers, abandonment of messages, skipping, and incomplete sentences constitute several challenges surrounding the interpretation of church sermons.

In East Africa, Kenya has received more empirical studies on problems of church interpreters than other countries (Ali, 1981; Odhiambo, Musyoka, & Matu, 2013; Musyoka & Karanja, 2014). For example, Biamah (2013) examined problems encountered during sermon interpretation and attempts made by interpreters to overcome them in Uasin Gishu county in Kenya. She found out that church interpreters encountered several challenges such as unclear vocabulary, speed of preaching, competence in the working languages, and an interpreter's experience. Musyoka and Karanja (2014) also investigated problems facing interpreters in the Pentecostal church sermon in Machakao Town. They found that interpreters' unsuccessful interpretation was caused by challenges such as technical terms, speed of delivery, input problem, and others.

Most of the reviewed literature has concentrated more on the analysis of their observations of sermons interpreted from one language to another. This study sought to examine the challenges facing church interpreters by considering participants' perceptions in Tanzania in English and Kiswahili. More empirical studies are still needed to systematically account for the extent of the problem in each country and find appropriate solutions to overcome them.

In the Tanzanian context, churches with interpretation services have been increasing significantly in recent years. Some church members have been taking part as volunteers to interpret sermons in some churches, especially in Charismatic and Pentecostal churches. Those volunteers are the ones with basic fluency in Kiswahili and English language but without professional training in Interpretation Studies. They usually interpret from either English to Kiswahili or sometimes from Kiswahili to English.

Church interpreters, especially these untrained volunteers encounter various challenges that hinder their performances. There is limited literature to account for problems facing interpreters in Tanzania. This paper examined different interpretation challenges facing the church interpreters in Tanzania either from English to Kiswahili or from Kiswahili to English.

3. Empirical Research Methodology and Materials Used

This section provides the empirical methodology used to conduct this study. It also includes materials that were used to analyze data on the challenges facing sermon interpreters in Tanzania. This section consists of the study area, research design, population and sampling procedure, data collection methods, data analysis approach.

3.1 Study Area

This study was done in Dar es Salaam City in Tanzania involving ten Pentecostal and Charismatic churches including T.A.G., Pentecostal churches, Lutheran, SDA, and Individual Ministries. Literature shows that the study areas should involve selecting all sites that ensure sufficient data wealth for the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). This area was purposely chosen since it is characterized by various churches that offer an interpretation of sermons in English and Kiswahili languages. The

availability of numerous churches with interpretation services in Dar es Salaam guaranteed the availability of sufficient data on the interpretation challenges facing church interpreters.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is defined as decisions regarding what, where, when, how much, by what means concerning the inquiry (Kothari, 2004). Kothari further argues that the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data by combining relevance to the research purpose and economy in procedure. This study used the Phenomenological Research Design. According to Finlay (2009), phenomenology is the study of phenomena: their nature and meaning. This design aims at describing the lived experience of individuals with regard to the specific phenomenon and how they interpret these experiences. It focuses on peoples' perceptions of the world in which they live and what it means to them (Langdrige, 2007). It describes the essence of experiencing the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In response to the purpose of the study, this design was used to understand church stakeholders' perceptions of the challenges facing church interpreters. Therefore, church interpreters, preachers, and members of the congregation gave their perceptions, understanding, and experiences on the challenges faced by church interpreters during the interpretation of sermons in Kiswahili and English.

3.3 Population and Sampling Procedure

The targeted population of this study was the church sermons interpreters, preachers, and church members. This targeted population was suitable for this study because it provided adequate and sufficient data needed in this study. This study involved 60 participants including 30 interpreters, 20 church members, and 10 preachers. They were specifically asked to explain the common challenges faced by church interpreters. A purposive sampling technique was used to select churches whose sermons were interpreted in English and Kiswahili languages. Church members were sampled based on those who understood sermons given in English and Kiswahili. Church leaders proposed names of members with high proficiency in the working languages. Church interpreters and preachers were selected by using the convenience technique based on those who were available and ready to participate in this study in each church visited.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The data were collected through four major methods namely, observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, and questionnaire. This study is primarily qualitative in nature although to a small extent it was triangulated by the quantitative approach to account for percentage distributions of each challenge. According to Cohen and Manion (2007), there is no single method that can work in isolation. Firstly, the researcher observed interpreters when interpreting sermons in church settings. In the observation method, the observer looks for, listens, and records the information in the natural setting (Silverman, 2000). Sermon interpreters, preachers, and church members were interviewed on the common challenges faced by church interpreters. Questionnaires were also provided to the interpreters, preachers, and church members especially those with limited chances to participate in the interview.

3.5 Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed by using Content Analysis with the aid of the NVivo program version 10. Content analysis refers to the technique which is used to analyze or examine or trace communication people have left behind (Pajo, 2018). Transcriptions from interviews and the focus group discussions were done by using the f4 software. Responses from transcripts were divided into paragraphs, and sentences indicating themes of challenges facing interpreters. This made a meaningful and comprehensive phenomenon as suggested by scholars (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Questionnaires were analyzed by using descriptive IBM SPSS version 25. Statistical results were important to account for the percentage distribution of these challenges facing the church interpreters. These techniques helped to analyze data effectively.

4. Findings and Discussions

The results of this study are presented and discussed in this section. In presenting the findings of this study, the main focus was on the perceptions, attitudes, and live-experiences of the church stakeholders regarding the challenges facing the church interpreters in Tanzania. In addition, questionnaires were analyzed descriptively. These challenges were stated by church interpreters, preachers, and church members. These participants of the study had different contradicting perceptions of the challenges faced by church interpreters in Tanzania.

4.1 Lack of Enough Language Competence

This is the first challenge that was highly reported by numerous participants of this study. They revealed that church interpreters lacked sufficient language competence in the working languages. This problem is discussed differently by each group of participants. For instance, church interpreters asserted that the language problem which they face is contributed by preachers in most cases. During the second in-depth interview with the second participant B who was an interpreter from one of the Pentecostal churches affirmed, "The language problem faced by interpreters during the interpretation of sermons is contributed by the difficult pronunciation, vocabulary, and the speed of pastors."

In the above quotation, the interpreters revealed that the language problem which they face is caused by preachers. In sufficing the above proposition, other interpreters also claimed that they were facing the language-related problem. During the second in-depth interview (IDI-2), participant B, who was an experienced interpreter had the following to say:

... Another challenge that is faced by the interpreters is a lack of knowledge of a language. Interpreters are not well informed of the working languages especially English. They probably lack equivalent words to interpret. So, this is a problem. If you are not well-informed of the language, it is a challenge. It will be difficult to make an interpretation effectively.

The quotation above was uttered by an experienced interpreter with more than 40 years in the interpretation profession. He argued that most of the interpreters in church settings lacked sufficient language skills.

On the other hand, other participants including preachers and church members argued that church interpreters were experiencing language problems due to their own lacked experience, exposure, and training of interpreting. Participant L, the church member from one of the Tanzania Assemblies of God churches (TAG) commented, "...As I told you before, some of the challenges include lack of formal training, exposure, experience, and talent."

A similar line of argument was also given by another (participant G) who was the preacher. During the seventh in-depth interview IDI-7, participant G revealed that most of his church interpreters lacked language skills, thus, hindering their performances. The following verbatim quote from the participant illustrates the argument in question:

The first challenge is language problem. Most interpreters are not good at English. In other words, English is not their first language. So, they encounter a lot of challenges in interpreting some of the words. They waste a lot of time thinking of what to say in the target language and that loses the flow of preaching. This is due to their limited experience and exposure to the English language.

Lack of language competence was the major problem that faced the interpreters. According to the preacher in the above quotation, a lack of language skills made the interpreter take a long time in finding the equivalent words to say, something that destroyed the flow of preaching. This was contributed by the fact that church interpretation services were provided by untrained interpreters. They lacked professional training in Translation, Interpretation, and Linguistics Studies. All participants confirmed that they lacked professional skills in interpretation.

Being the major challenge facing the interpreters, the language problem has been discussed by many church interpreters during the interview. For instance, 40 (66.67%) participants out of 60 revealed that interpreters lacked language knowledge on the working languages as indicated in Figure 1.

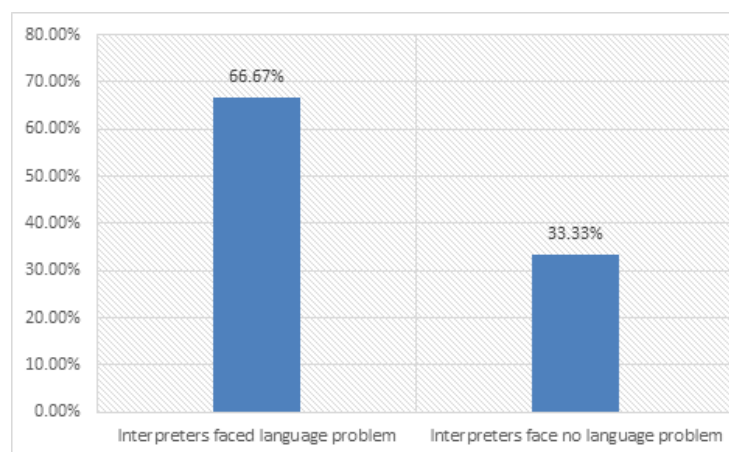


Figure 1. Percentage of Participants with a Language Challenge

Source: Field Data (2019)

These findings concurred with findings from other scholars elsewhere. They also reported that the lack of sufficient language competence is the major problem that faced the untrained church interpreters in their countries (Odhiambo, Musyoka, & Matu, 2013; Musyoka & Karanja, 2014; Thembhani, 2016; Biamah, 2013). On contrary to the finding of these scholars, this study discussed different perceptions of the causes of the language problem among the church interpreters.

4.2 Lack of Background in Biblical Knowledge

Another challenge that was also highly reported by participants is the absence of sufficient background in biblical knowledge among the church interpreters. It was observed that one of the key requirements for the church interpretation is sufficient biblical knowledge among the church interpreters (Peremota, 2017). Most church interpreters were not well versed in the scriptures, something that made them fail to render sermons effectively. During the first focus group discussion (FGD-1), participant F who was the interpreter claimed that this challenge affected their performance. The following verbatim quote from participant F illustrates the point at hand:

... Another challenge encountered by most of the interpreters is to be poor in the word of God. This is attributed to the fact that the preacher can preach by quoting several scriptures. So, if you are not rich in the word of God, you will likely get a hard time getting it right.

The above quotation reveals how a lack of biblical knowledge affected church interpreters. This problem was caused by various reasons including failure of the church preachers to provide speaking notes to the interpreters, lack of the Bible reading culture, and absence of seriousness. The limitation of the scriptural knowledge among the interpreters made them fail to go along with the preachers who were well-versed. Some preachers recited the scriptures from their heads without reading them from the Holy Bible. This situation made interpreters lose focus, attention, and rhythm as they struggled to find the scriptures in the Bible. The following verbatim quote by participant N illustrates more the argument in question:

... Another challenge is poor scriptural knowledge. Church interpreters are supposed to be conversant in the scripture of God. They are supposed to be well-acquainted with the scripture. For instance, when I preach, I normally do not prefer reading the verses from the Bible. I usually prepare sermons on a piece of paper. So, I usually preach by reciting from the paper. More often, the Kiswahili interpreters find it difficult to recite scriptures from their brain because they had not prepared well.

In this case, 40 (66.67%) out of all 60 participants reported that interpreters encountered difficulties in reciting biblical verses as shown in Figure 2.

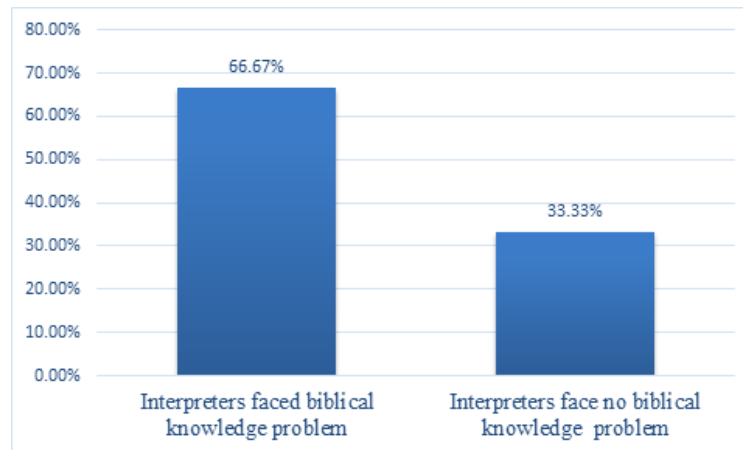


Figure 2. Percentage of Participants with Biblical Knowledge Challenge

Source: Field Data (2019)

Consider the following example from Sermon 1.

1. Preacher: You shall worship only the Lord God 00:08:31-0

Interpreter: *Utamheshimu Bwana Mungu wako pekee yake* 00:08:33-3

BI: [You shall respect the Lord your God alone]

FI: *Utamuabudu Bwana Mungu wako pekee*

Source: (<Internals\\Sermon 01>)

The above example reveals that the interpreter failed to interpret the text, “*You shall worship only the Lord God*”, correctly due to a lack of biblical knowledge. If the interpreter was well-versed, he would have known that the scripture comes from Luke 4:8 which reads as, “*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*”. Having known this verse, the interpreter would easily interpret it as “*Utamuabudu Bwana Mungu wako pekee*” [You shall worship only the Lord God.] But because of this challenge, he ended up misinterpreting it as “*Utamheshimu Bwana Mungu wako pekee*” which is translated back as [You shall respect only Lord your God.]

On the other hand, those church interpreters who managed to have sufficient interpreting experience and who had Bible reading culture managed to interpret the sermons faithfully. For instance, the church interpreter of 11 years of interpreting church sermons in one of the Individual Ministries interpreted the source text as follows:

2. Preacher: The father seeks true worshippers 00:01:54-5

Interpreter: *Baba huwatafuta waabudio halisi* 00:01:57-4

Source: <Internals\\Sermon 4 Agape>

The interpreter in example 2 delivered a faithful interpretation of the source text. The interpreted text also is contextualized to fit the context of church members.

Close observation from results indicates that some of these interpreters who managed to have acquired sufficient biblical knowledge were the ones who had a long interpreting experience of church

interpretation. So, all those who had a long interpreting experience of at least ten or more years managed to have sufficient Biblical knowledge. In supporting this aforementioned assertion, some scholars affirmed that some volunteer untrained interpreters managed to interpret successfully despite lacking specific training in either interpretation or translation is due to their tacit knowledge gained through experience, interactional expertise, and the Bible knowledge acquired through their active engagement in the church community (Da Silva, Soares, 2018). In view of this point, this group of interpreters managed to have effective interpretation services in their churches.

Generally, the background in biblical knowledge played a significant role in helping interpreters to perform well. Lacking such knowledge made them fail to cope with the preachers' pace, thus rendering the wrong message to the audience.

4.3 The Use of Difficult Terminology

Another challenge facing church interpreters is the use of difficult vocabularies. Failure to comprehend some vocabularies from preachers was another linguistic challenge stated by participants of this study. Participants demonstrated some difficulties in interpreting some words which seemed somewhat intricate. This problem was too vivid, especially when foreign preachers preached the sermons. One of the participants unveiled that some foreign preachers used technical terminologies when preaching, something that caused them to fail to comprehend the speech. During the second FGD, participant J, a church interpreter accentuated,

... Sometimes you can find the preacher is using kinds of words that are difficult to understand. So, you start feeling some difficulties in your interpretation. Sometimes, this difficulty is not about the meanings of words, but how English words are pronounced by foreigners. As you may know, the way they speak English differs from the way local preachers speak it.

The above quotation reveals that the use of difficult vocabularies is a very serious challenge among the church interpreters. The use of difficult English vocabularies happened when the preachers uttered or spoke some English words which are difficult to be comprehended by the church interpreters. They consequently ended up misinterpreting the sermons in English and Kiswahili. Likewise, the difficult vocabularies can also be a challenge among the members of the congregation when uttered by the church interpreters. Thus, some interpreters who used difficult vocabularies made some church members fail to get the intended message of the sermons. The following verbatim quote from participant F illustrates more,

... Another challenge faced by interpreters is the use of difficult terms. Some words that are uttered by preachers are difficult to comprehend. Sometimes preachers use difficult words that are not known by interpreters. As a result, interpreters fail to understand the meaning of such words. Thus, they misinterpret the source sermons. So, this is another serious challenge we face when interpreting sermons.

From the foregoing challenge, many church interpreters, preachers, and church members revealed that difficult vocabularies were one of the very serious language problems facing church interpreters. This

is because when preachers used difficult terminologies, they prevented interpreters from understanding the ST and failed to interpret sermons effectively in English and Kiswahili. Likewise, when the interpreters used difficult vocabularies, they banned church members from understanding the Word of God.

During the fieldwork, some preachers used difficult vocabulary. Also, some church interpreters used complex terms when they transferred messages in English and Kiswahili. These terms were unclear, ambiguous, or technical in nature. Church interpreters failed to understand their meanings. As a result, they either sent the wrong message or skipped a large part of the sentences. Consider the following examples as given in some churches visited:

- 3. Preacher:** Sio mfumo wa **malalamiko** 00:01:33-9
Interpreter: Not system of **comenting** 00:01:36-2
FI: *It is not a complaining system*
- 4. Preacher:** **Manung'uniko** 00:01:38-4
Interpreter: Or **complaining** 00:01:38-4
FI: *Complaints*

Source: <Internals\\Sermon 2 at one of Ministries in Dar>

- 5. Preacher:** Kwa sababu **maombi** ya kuzimu yapo 00:04:56-4
Interpreter: Hell **powers** are there 00:04:58-2
FI: *Because prayers of hell exist*
- 6. Preacher:** Baharini wanatuma **mapepo** 00:05:13-4
Interpreter: They send **evil** in the ocean 00:05:17-3
FI: *They send demons to the ocean*

Source: <Internals\\Sermon 11 at one of TAG Churches>

Examples 3-6 above reveal how church interpreters distort the source texts given by preachers due to the lack of sufficient English language competence. In example 3, the interpreter experienced difficulty in interpreting the term “*malalamiko*” [*complaints*] in English by just saying “*commenting*” instead of “*grievance or complaints*”. This distorted the intended message where the preacher meant “*It is not a complaining system*”. This distortion was caused by a lack of sufficient appropriate synonyms for the TLT.

Similarly, example 4 indicates how the church interpreter failed to interpret the source text “*manung'uniko*” by saying [*complaining*] instead of “*complaints*”. The preacher decided to use another term “*manung'uniko*” instead of “*malalamiko*” to help the interpreter understand what she meant, following the fact that the interpreter distorted the first source term “*malalamiko*”. Unfortunately, even in this new synonym, the interpreter failed again to get the appropriate synonym in the target language text.

Example 5 also shows how the church interpreter distorted the meaning of “*maombi ya kuzimu*” with “*hell power*” [*nguvu ya kuzimu*] instead of [*prayer of hell*] due to the limited English language

competence. In a similar vein, the interpreter misinterpreted the source term “*mapepo*” in example 6 by saying [*evil*] instead of “*demons*”. When the church interpreters were asked why they were distorting the messages of the source texts, they confirmed that they could not get the ideal synonyms for the said source texts. As a result, they distorted the intended messages.

It was found that 46 (77%) out of all 60 participants declared that interpreters faced the challenge of difficult vocabularies. Figure 3 indicates the use of difficult vocabulary challenge.

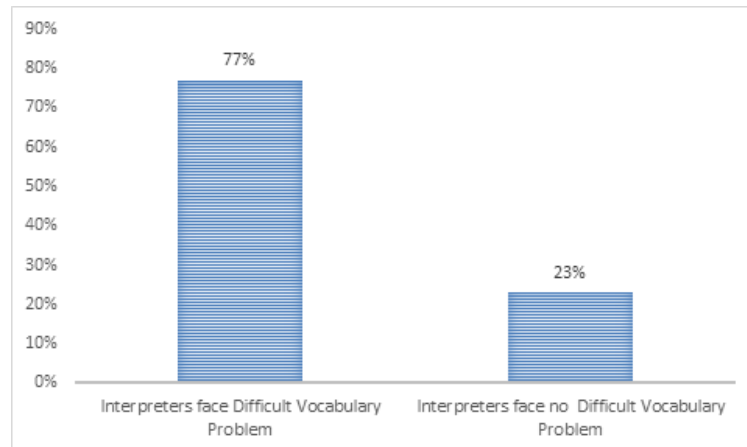


Figure 3. Percentage of Interpreters with Difficult Vocabulary Challenge

Source: Field Data (2019)

4.4 Difficulties in Pronunciation and Unpredictable Preaching Styles

Other challenges that affected most of the church interpreters were difficulties in pronunciation and failure to cope with the unpredictable preaching styles. These in return, in most cases, do not consider reading the verses from the Bible. These challenges were more common when the interpreters were interpreting sermons from the foreign preachers. Many church interpreters had not been exposed to different preachers especially their pronunciations and their preaching styles. They were accustomed to only one local preacher in their churches. The subsequent quotation from the fifth FGD by participant E demonstrated the effects of difficult pronunciation:

... Pronunciation of the preachers is one of the serious challenges that we normally encounter when interpreting sermons. This challenge makes us fail to comprehend the vocabulary by preachers, hence failure to mediate an effective interpretation of sermons. Another challenge faced by the interpreters is the speed of the preachers. So, sometimes you find that before completing interpretation, the preacher had already jumped to another utterance.

The pronunciation challenge was more palpable when the foreign preacher preached in the English language. Many interpreters failed to mediate the message to the target language effectively. The church interpreters failed to cope with the preaching styles of preachers and a high speed. This is due to the fact that many interpreters lacked exposure to interpretation from various preachers in different

modes of interpretation. In addition, they lacked professional training. In support of the argument in question, participant H (one of the preachers) had the following observation:

... Another challenge is that people speak at different paces. There are fast speakers and there are slow speakers. Therefore, if the speaker is very fast in speaking, the interpreter now finds it hard to catch up with the speaker. People speak with different tones. There are people with a high pitched-voice and there are people with a low pitched-voice. Other pastors preach by shouting. Some pastors preach by lecturing and are very cool and calm.

The important point to note in this discussion is that difficulties in pronunciation and unpredictable preaching styles are major challenges facing church interpreters. Statistical results show that 46 (76.67%) out of all 60 participants revealed that church interpreters encountered pronunciation challenges. Figure 4 indicates the percentages of participants who proposed that difficulties in pronunciation and unpredictable preaching styles are among the challenges faced by interpreters.

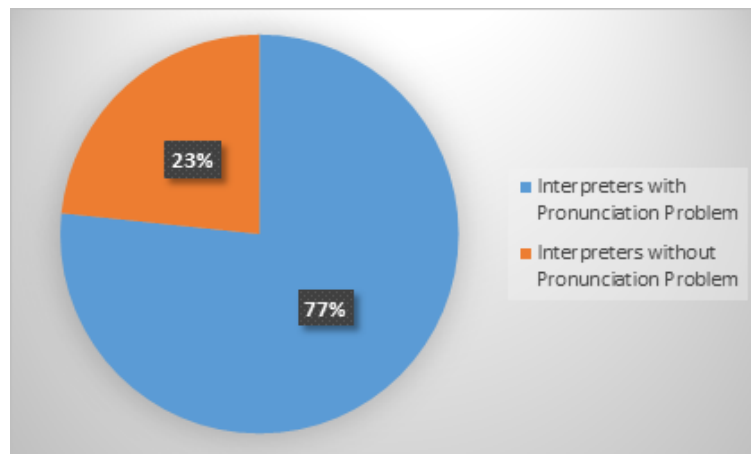


Figure 4. Percentage of Interpreters with the Pronunciation Challenge

Source: Field Data (2019)

In a similar vein, many scholars from other countries also reported the issue of pronunciations of the speakers and the speed of preaching to be the major problems (Kalina, 1994; Musyoka & Karanja, 2014; Odhiambo et al., 2013; Thembhani, 2016). The referred problems also affected the performances of church interpreters in Tanzania. For instance, consider the following utterances by the preacher and interpreter in one of the studied churches.

- 7. Preacher:** Pray (commonly translated as *kuomba* in Kiswahili)
Interpreter: *Kucheza* (to play)
FI: Praying

The interpreter in the above example 7 failed to comprehend well the pronunciation of the source word “*pray*” /preɪ/ which means “*kuomba*” rather, he overheard the word “*play*” /pleɪ/ which means “*kucheza*”. This situation made the interpreter to distort the source text of the preacher. Hence, church

members got the wrong message.

4.5 Lack of Preparation and Prior Communication

Another challenge reported by the majority of interpreters was a lack of sufficient preparation. The quality church interpretation requires the interpreter to prepare thoroughly well spiritually, psychologically, and physically (Peremota, 2017). Spiritual preparation requires interpreters to know the textual interpretation of the scripture they are interpreting. They are supposed to be close to God and have the Holy Spirit to guide them in their interpretation services. Also, interpreters were supposed to be given beforehand, the speech, and scripture that will be used in the coming sermons. However, it was unfortunate that almost all the church preachers interviewed did not provide speeches or preaching notes to interpreters. Participant J, a preacher, confirmed that most church leaders do not give speaking notes to interpreters as a mechanism of preparing them for interpretation service. The following verbatim quote by participant J illustrates the point at hand:

... That issue of giving them texts before interpreting, I think it's a real problem. We don't give them texts. I do not provide my speaking notes to them before not even during the interpretation. They usually interpret by following what I'm saying. Most preachers both in my church and other churches I know do not provide texts or speaking notes before the service to the interpreters. So, the interpreter has to rely on the preacher entirely.

This act of not giving preaching notes made most church interpreters fail to interpret sermons effectively. As a result of poor preparation, the interpreters failed to render the messages effectively to members of congregations. As per the aforementioned above, the quality church interpretation required the interpreters to get prepared thoroughly well spiritually, psychologically, and physically. Spiritual preparation required the interpreters to be close to God and ask the Holy Spirit to guide them in their interpretation services (Díaz-Galaz, Padilla, & Bajo, 2015). In addition, the interpreters were supposed to communicate with preachers before sermons about themes, scriptures, and even the preaching modes. However, it was unfortunate that almost all church preachers were not providing these speeches or speaking notes to the interpreter. This refuted Gish's proportion that required interpreters to take into consideration themes, goals, objectives, and details of the source speaker (Gish, 1996). Consequently, interpreters encountered difficulty in processing messages as they receive them on spot.

In addition to that, interpreters were not getting time to meet with the preachers before the interpretation service. The following verbatim quote by participant I illustrates more on the argument at hand:

... I would like to add another challenge faced by the interpreters. The referred challenge is a lack of communication between the interpreter and the preacher before the sermons. So, you may find the interpreter who is not ready to interpret the sermons. As a result, they end up contradicting themselves by giving terminologies that are not equivalent to source speech. So, there is no prior communication at all.

In general, communicating with preachers before sermons helped a lot in preparing church interpreters

to interpret well in the church settings. Therefore, for effective interpretation, the preachers have to meet with the interpreters to discuss the theme, goal, objectives, and details that are going to be preached, key scriptures that are going to be used, and even the preaching style just as proposed by the Gish processing model (Gish, 1996). This act of meeting with preachers helps the interpreters to pray together, read more about the topic and scriptures, and to practice the interpretation. Contrary to that, interpreters failed to interpret the sermons effectively.

This finding corresponds to the statistical findings of this study which indicates that 40 participants (73.3%) out of all 60 participants revealed that lack of preparation among the church interpreters was a major challenge facing them. This is revealed in Figure 5 below:

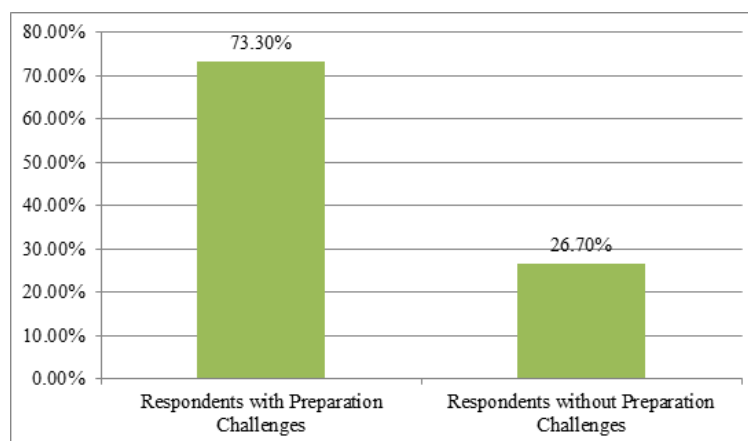


Figure 5. Percentage of Interpreters with Preparation Challenge

Source: Field Data (2019)

4.6 Preaching with Different Paces

Another challenge was reported as a failure to cope with different preaching styles. Participants conveyed that preachers were speaking at different pace and style. Some of them were speaking too fast while others were speaking too slowly. Other preachers had high-pitched tones while others are low-pitched voices. Again, others were preaching like shouting while others were calm and collected. Yet, some preachers were giving lectures. The challenges came when the interpreters failed to keep pace with these varying preaching styles of different preachers. Participant B during the first FGD stressed,

... The other challenge of course is the speed of the interpreters. The majority of interpreters fail to cope with different styles of preaching. We can adjust to the preachers who go fast. If you get the preacher who gives you spaces to interpret then it becomes easy to flow with him/her and even the interpretation becomes so easy. But if you find the flow of the preacher is not organized, the preacher has not organized his message, then, that becomes another challenge.

So, the participant in the above quotation demonstrated the difficulty felt by church interpreters when

interpreting sermons with preachers who speak very fast. Also participant D in the FGD-1 in supporting this argument, he uncovered that the high speed of preachers makes the interpreters lose their paces. The following verbatim quote from participant D illustrates more on this assertion:

... Some of the preachers are preaching too fast. This situation makes interpreters fail to cope with the speed of such preachers. We are losing the pace of the way they preach. So, sometimes, it poses the challenge of interpreting sermons. So, that is one of the challenges faced by the interpreters.

The high speed of preaching resulted in the poor performance of most interpreters. A total of 46 (77%) participants revealed that church interpreters experience difficulties in coping with preachers' styles of preaching. Figure 6 indicates the percentage of participants who proposed unpredictable preaching styles as a challenge facing interpreters.

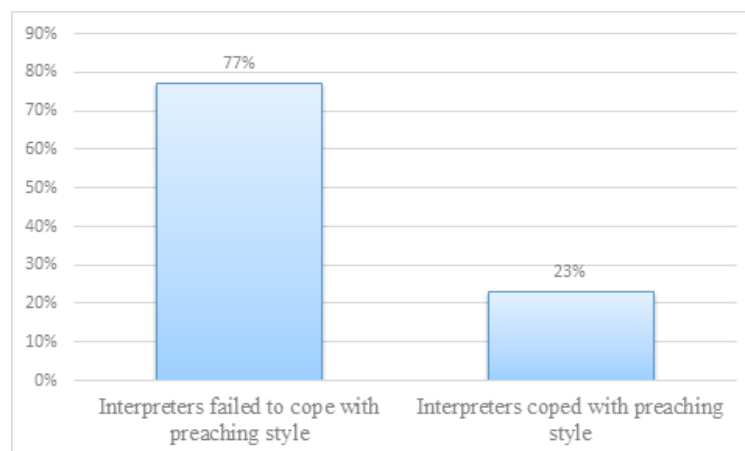


Figure 6. Percentage of Interpreters who Fail to Cope with Preachers' Speed

Source: Field Data (2019)

In general, prior communication with preachers helped a lot in the preparation among the church interpreters. The preachers are supposed to meet the interpreters to discuss the theme to be preached, key scriptures to be used, and preaching style. This act of meeting the preachers could help the interpreters to pray together, read more about the topic and scriptures, and practice the interpretation in advance.

5. Conclusions

Although church interpreters lacked professional training in translation and interpretation, some interpreters somehow succeeded to interpret in these working languages. Most of those who managed to interpret effectively were those who had interpreting experience of more than ten years. Literature elsewhere has pointed out reasons for the success of untrained interpreters including their tacit knowledge, acquiring interpretation experiences and interactional expertise, through Bible or domain

knowledge, and through church community engagement (Da Silva, 2018).

On the other hand, those interpreters with a very short interpreting experience were confronted with numerous challenges. These challenges included a lack of sufficient linguistic knowledge, lack of biblical knowledge, difficulties in pronunciation and unpredictable preaching styles, difficult vocabularies, lack of preparation, and prior communication preaching with different paces. The majority of the interviewed church interpreters lacked professional skills of interpretation, language competencies, exposure, and biblical knowledge. These challenges to a great extent affected their performance and are in agreement with challenges enlightened by other scholars in African countries (Musyoka & Karanja, 2014; Odhiambo, Musyoka, & Matu, 2013; Biamah, 2013; Thembhani, 2016). Most churches visited still prefer untrained volunteering interpreters. There is a pressing need for these church interpreters to undertake professional training in translation and interpretation. There is also a pressing need to practice a lot for them to be effective interpreters.

Therefore, this paper calls upon the church institutions to train the interpreters in the fields of linguistics, translation, interpretation, and theology. Training interpreters will help them to master professional strategies used to deal with the challenges when they are confronted, they will improve their services, as well as they will be used to interpret in other contexts such as in international conferences. Similarly, there is a need for Christian Universities to design a training program or a course-specific for the church interpretation.

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